

Message Text

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ACTION DHA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4047

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 23956

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CASC VS VN FR

SUBJECT: EVACUATION OF FOREIGNERS FROM VIETNAM

REFS: A. BANGKOK 23066

B. PARIS 23955

1. DURING A RECENT CONVERSATION CONCERNING THE EVACUATION OF AMERICANS AND OTHER FOREIGN NATIONALS FROM VIETNAM (REFTEL B), THE QUAI DESK OFFICER FOR VIETNAM COMMENTED ON PROBLEMS WHICH ARE LIKELY TO ARISE IN THE FAIRLY NEAR FUTURE. ACCORDING TO THE QUAI OFFICIAL, A BASIC DIFFICULTY IN ENSURING THE SPEEDY EVACUATION OF FOREIGNERS WHO WISH TO LEAVE VIETNAM IS THE SIZE AND WORKLOAD OF THE FRENCH CONSULATE IN SAIGON. ALTHOUGH THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT DEMANDED THAT THE SIZE OF THE CONSULATE BE DECREASED, IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THEY WILL. EVEN IF THEY ALLOW IT TO REMAIN AT ITS CURRENT STAFF LEVEL, THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN OF PROCESSING INDIVIDUALS ATTEMPTING TO LEAVE VIETNAM HAS BECOME ALMOST INTOLERABLE. WITH THE CLOSING OF ALL OTHER
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CONSULATES IN SAIGON, THE FRENCH NOW FIND THEMSELVES

HAVING TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO ALL FOREIGN NATIONALS WHO WISH TO BE REPATRIATED. ALTHOUGH THE QUAI OFFICIAL DID NOT PROVIDE SPECIFIC FIGURES, HE NOTED THAT THE FRENCH CONSULATE IN SAIGON REPORTS THERE IS A SERIOUS BACKLOG WHICH IS INCREASING EACH DAY.

2. THIS PROBLEM IS COMPOUNDED BY THE FACT THAT THE QUAI HAS RECEIVED REPORTS THAT THE ICRC, WHICH HAS PROVIDED ASSISTANCE IN THE PAST, WILL BE PHASING OUT OF SAIGON BY THE END OF AUGUST. THE HEAD OF THE ICRC DELEGATION WILL REMAIN UNTIL SEPTEMBER 15, BUT IT IS UNREALISTIC TO ASSUME THAT THE ICRC WILL BE IN A POSITION TO AID THE FRENCH CONSULATE IN ITS PROCESSING OF EVACUEES. THE QUAI OFFICIAL COMMENTED THAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT IS UNCLEAR AS TO WHETHER THE UNHCR WILL MAINTAIN ITS REPRESENTATION IN SAIGON, BUT EXPRESSED THE PERSONAL OPINION THAT IT, LIKE THE ICRC, MIGHT WELL BE FORCED TO MOVE TO HANOI.

3. ACCORDING TO THE QUAI OFFICIAL, THE ONLY CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM CONCERNING THE EVENTUAL PROSPECTS FOR EVACUATING FOREIGN NATIONALS WHO WISH TO LEAVE VIETNAM IS THAT THE VIETNAMESE ARE APPARENTLY WILLING TO BE FLEXIBLE ABOUT FUTURE EVACUATION FLIGHTS. ALTHOUGH THE REGULAR FLIGHTS ARE EXPECTED TO CEASE ON AUGUST 31, AS PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED, THE QUAI IS PERSUADED THAT THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT WILL PERMIT SPECIAL EVACUATION FLIGHTS FROM SAIGON FOR AS LONG AS IS "NECESSARY". THE QUAI OFFICIAL NOTED THAT THE CONTINUATION OF SPECIAL FLIGHTS WILL BE CONTINGENT ON SATISFACTORY RELATIONS BETWEEN FRANCE AND THE SRV, AND ON SRV INTERNAL STABILITY, BUT COMMENTED THAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT DOES NOT FORESEE ANY PROBLEMS IN EITHER OF THESE AREAS.

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